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Hebrew Life and Thought: Being Interpretative Studies in the Literature of Israel. By LOUISE SEYMOUR HOUGHTON. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1906. Pp. ix+386. \$1.50.

The Origin and Permanent Value of the Old Testament. By CHARLES FOSTER KENT, Ph.D., Woolsey Professor of Biblical Literature in Yale University. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906. Pp. xii+270. \$1.

The former editor of the *Evangelist*, favorably known through her various literary labors, seeks in *Hebrew Life and Thought* to enable the ordinary reader of the Bible to appreciate it as literature. The book will be very useful to many readers, in spite of the fact that it has from the scholar's point of view some serious faults. Chapter 1, "The Day-Book of the Most High," is a plea for an appreciation of the Bible as literature. Chapter 2, "Folklore in the Old Testament," is a very useful essay, and should be heartily commended to the reader. One wonders, however, that Gen., chaps. 2, 3, and 6:2-4 are not mentioned. The titles of the remaining chapters tell the story of the literary aim of the book. They are: "The Poetry of the Old Testament," "Heroes and Heroism," "Eastern Light on the Story of Elisha," "Love-Stories of Israel," "A Parable of Divine Love," "Secular Faith," "The Search for Spiritual Certainty," "The Hebrew Utopia," and "The Law and Modern Society."

The aim of the book is good. It breathes a profound faith. Its author loves the Bible all the more because it is not only a book of religious instruction, but appeals to her as literature in the way the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* does. The defects of the book are occasional extravagance of statement, too great an effort to make out biblical laws and family life superior to anything else in antiquity, and an artificial interpretation of such books as Canticles and Ruth.

The author's extravagance of statement appears, for example, on p. 45, where she says that commentators "have shed gallons of ink over reams of paper" to explain a point in the experience of Elijah which seems to her clear. Again, it may be seen on p. 329, where she makes too extravagant a statement of the excellencies of Israel's law, and on p. 356, where she is far more laudatory of the Hebrew laws of marriage and divorce than the facts warrant. This last instance seems to have arisen from long association with the Bible as an inspired book, and failure fully to estimate it as literature in comparison with other literature. Lev., chap. 18, which is cited as restricting polygamy in Israel, really does not touch the subject at all. One could certainly obtain wives enough without marrying his near kindred.

The deuteronomic law, which allowed the husband free right of divorce for any cause, provided no alimony, and denied to women all similar rights, is certainly inferior to the Code of Hammurabi, §§ 137-40, which provides for alimony if a wife is divorced, and under some circumstances permits the wife to initiate a divorce. One need not deny that the Hebrew treatment of women was in some respects inferior to the Babylonian in order to maintain the inspiration of the Bible, for the test of inspiration is the conception of God, rather than excellence in the details of social organization.

In her interpretation of the Song of Solomon Mrs. Houghton is a generation behind biblical science. She still follows the interpretation of Ewald which makes it a drama, enacting how a shepherd maiden was faithful to her shepherd lover, in spite of the blandishments of Solomon aided by the ladies of his court. Biblical science today (except those who cannot be expected to discard in age views championed in youth) more correctly regards the book as a collection of songs sung during the festal week after an oriental marriage, in which the physical charms of bride and groom and the delights of wedded life are set forth with a frankness unknown to occidental life. When once one reads the poem with his eyes open, it is clear that it is a praise of wedded love throughout. Chap. 2:6 is on the dramatic theory attributed to the unmarried Shulamite, but it would be no more pure for her and her unwedded shepherd lover than for her and Solomon. The poems were no doubt enacted as a sort of rude drama, but that they had any such plot or purpose as this book claims is loudly denied by the poems themselves.

Similarly the story of Ruth is misunderstood (pp. 155-58). The euphemism "feet" of Ruth 3:4, which is used in many parts of the Old Testament, is mistaken, and an act of a rude age is glossed over and made unreal.

Possibly these defects will make the book more useful than it would otherwise be to some who are not prepared to face the truth. We heartily sympathize with the purpose and spirit of the volume, although we wish it were even better. The form and make-up of the book are excellent.

Professor Kent's most timely and useful book deserves to be read by a large body of Christian people. Its author is already well and favorably known through his histories of the Hebrew and Jewish people, and also through his *Student's Old Testament*, which is still in process of publication. The work before us is of a more popular nature than either of those mentioned. It is designed to help intelligent laymen to understand just how modern critical study has affected the Bible, and what in view of that effect the permanent value of the Scriptures is. The volume is in reality broader

than its title, for it covers the New Testament as well as the Old. Its scope and contents are indicated by the titles of the chapters: "The Eclipse and Rediscovery of the Old Testament"; "The Real Nature and Purpose of the Old Testament"; "The Earliest Chapters in Divine Revelation"; "The Place of the Old Testament in Divine Revelation"; "The Influences That Produced the Old Testament"; "The Growth of the Old Testament Prophetic Histories"; "The History of the Prophetic Sermons, Epistles, and Apocalypses"; "The Development of the Earlier Old Testament Laws"; Influences That Gave Rise to the Priestly Laws and Histories"; "The Hebrew Sages and Their Proverbs"; "The Writings of Israel's Philosophers"; "The History of the Psalter"; "The Formation of the Old Testament Canon"; "The Interpretation of the Earlier Narratives of the Old Testament"; "Practical Methods of Studying the Old Testament"; and "Religious Education—the Fundamental Problem of Today." The title of the concluding chapter—which, by the way, is a very valuable one—suggests that the book is in reality one of the fruits of the organization of the Religious Education Association, and places intelligent Christians under obligation both to that Association and to Professor Kent.

The author presents his subject with admirable clearness and fairness, and in an untechnical way. Anyone can grasp the points which he makes. Professor Kent's grasp of the religious value of the literature which he passes in review is as firm as his grasp of the intellectual and historical problems which its discussion involves. In the "Earliest Chapters in Divine Revelation" Professor Kent recognizes—and this is an admirable feature of the volume—that in the long ages before the rise of Israel a beginning was made by Babylon and Egypt in the grasp of important fundamental truth, and that Israel at a later period built upon this foundation.

There is singularly little in the book from which one would differ. One such point occurs, however, on p. 46. In stating that the Code of Hammurabi "marks almost as high a stage in the revelation of what is right as the primitive Old Testament laws," Professor Kent hardly does justice to the noble Babylonian code. In some respects, as in its laws of divorce, the Code of Hammurabi exhibits a more advanced conception of right than even the law of Deuteronomy.

On the whole, however, Professor Kent has presented a large and difficult subject in small compass and popular form, with admirable clearness, fairness, and success. A copy of his book should be in the home of every church member in the country.

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